Decline in Export

2029. SHRI V. N. GADGIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pelased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rate of export has declined enormously since March, 1998;

(b) whether the decline in the rate of export will create balance of payment problems; and

(c) if so, what action Government have taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) As per the provisional Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI and S) data, the growth rate of exports for the period April-January 1998-99 in rupee terms was 11.98 percent. In dollar terms the exports showed a decline of 1.98 percent.

(b) and (c) Decline in the rate of exports affects the foreign exchange receipts thereby exerting pressure on the balance of payment position. A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include lowering of interest rates on export credit, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. The Government is also initiating action through seveal measures to facilitate investment in sectors with strong export potential, encourage diversification of India's export basket, address infrastructure short-comings, improve export facilitation measures and thus enhance the overall competitiveness of Indian exports. The Government is according high priority to exports and all necessary steps are being taken to put exports on high growth trajectory.

Pricing of tea

2030. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that at present Indian tea is priced at about Rs. 63 per kg.;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the to-be imported Sri Lankan tea is selling at about Rs. 45 per kg.;

(c) whether Government have decided to import Sri Lankan Tea without imposing any import duty thereon; and

(d) if so, the reasons and justifications, therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The average price of tea at different auctions during Feb, 1999 was between Rs. 64 & 66 per kg.

(b) to (d) Government has not taken any decision to import Sri Lankan Tea without imposing any import duty.

Offices of APEDA in Himachal Pradesh

2031. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of offices and locations of APEDA in Himachal Pradesh;

(b) the assistance given to apple growers of H.P especially in packaging during the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) the steps taken by Govt. to inerease the apple export during the last three years, year-wise and for finding new areas for export?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) There is no APEDA office lcoated in Himachal Pradesh. However, the APEDA Head Office in New Delhi caters to the Northern region including Himachal Pradesh, In addition, the Punjab State Agro Industrial Corproation at Chandigarh has been nominated to function as a Virtual Office. It provides